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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KYIV 001133

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [UP](#)
SUBJECT: UKRAINE: SEPTEMBER ELECTIONS IN THE WIND? HAYDUK
OUT, PLYUSHCH IN AT NSDC

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Classified By: Ambassador, reason 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary: President Yushchenko and PM Yanukovych resumed meetings to resolve the political impasse May 12 after Yanukovych returned to Ukraine from his Spanish knee surgery; Yushchenko said afterwards that the two would meet again May 16 to agree on the date for early elections. Presidential deputy head Chaliy and PM adviser Hryshchenko told Ambassador May 16 that elections would likely occur in September. Comments from the May 14 resumption of the wider working group seemed to support the sense that the two sides might reach agreement by May 16. Several odd developments occurred over the weekend: the unexpected May 12 resignation of National Security and Defense Council Secretary Hayduk, who only days earlier seemed to be playing a key constructive role in talks aimed at defusing the crisis, and strange rumors/commentary late May 11 about alleged assassination plots.

¶2. (C) Comment: Nothing ever seems truly over in Ukrainian politics, but for once the working group rhetoric May 14 seems to be reinforcing, rather than negating, optimistic signals coming out of an earlier Yushchenko-Yanukovych meeting. Chaliy's comments suggest that Yushchenko has agreed to a key Regions' demand: that elections happen in the fall rather than summer. Chaliy, a long-time close associate of Hayduk from their years together at the Industrial Union of the Donbas (IUD), told Ambassador May 12 that Hayduk had resigned after being asked to convene an NSDC meeting to consider dismissing the government, but he said May 14 that Hayduk's resignation may have helped lower tensions, the President seeming to have recognized the seriousness of the step. The reports of alleged documents revealing unnamed elements tracking Yushchenko's movements and targeting Secretariat Head Baloha and opposition leaders Tymoshenko and

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Lutsenko strike us as odd. Then again, Ukraine is a country with a sitting President who was poisoned in September 2004, and no serious progress has been made, or investigation even evident, in the past two and a half years (reftel). End Summary and Comment.

Talking again, and coming closer to a deal for September?

¶3. (SBU) After a several day hiatus necessitated by PM Yanukovych's sudden knee surgery in Barcelona, the two Viktors resumed their meetings Saturday May 12 to seek a way out of the current political crisis, this time accompanied by newly appointed NSDC Secretary Ivan Plyushch and First

DPM/Finance Minister Azarov. After the meeting, Plyushch and Azarov told reporters that Yushchenko and Yanukovych planned to agree on a date for early elections at a May 16 meeting, with the normally dour and cautious Azarov suggesting there was a "100 percent probability" that the date would be set May 16.

14. (C) Plyushch, in an interview published May 14, suggested that elections might take place July 15. However, Regions' financier Akhmetov told Dzerkalo Tyzhnia that July elections were "impossible" and that they should take place in autumn. Chaliy told Ambassador May 14 that Yushchenko had privately informed Polish President Kaczynski while in Warsaw May 11 that elections would occur in September, adding that Presidential Secretariat Head Baloha, seen as the hard-liner in Yushchenko's team, was on board with September elections. Chaliy noted that ongoing disagreement in the working group involved not only the dates for elections, but how long the Rada would remain in session to pass needed legislation. Another factor was Regions' desire to lock in the right of the party with the highest vote total to attempt to form a coalition majority first (note: Regions almost certainly will score another plurality, but it is clearly worried about the possibility of an OU-BYuT accommodation. As the coalition flipping in the summer of 2006 demonstrates, nothing can be taken for granted in Ukrainian politics).

15. (SBU) Working group negotiations resumed May 14 at 1000 at the Presidential Secretariat on Bankova. In contrast to past working group sessions, at which oral agreements between the two Viktors often fell apart, comments this time reinforced the May 12 optimism. Regions faction leader Bohatyryeva told reporters early in the day that the working group had almost completed amendments to the law on judicial administration (intended to deal with confusing court jurisdictional issues, from our understanding) and on the status of rada deputies, but that disagreement remained on proposed amendments to the parliamentary election law. With negotiations resuming at 1615, OU MP Onischuk suggested

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agreement on all bills might even be reached "late" on May 14.

Unexpected switch at the NSDC, and strange rumors

16. (C) The seeming surge forward in negotiations was accompanied by a curious development: the resignation (or firing) of Vitaliy Hayduk as NSDC Secretary early May 12. Hayduk had come into the job in late 2006 from his IUD business intending to focus on energy issues and bring a low-key, apolitical approach to the job. His connections to former partner and sometime business rival Rinat Akhmetov helped accelerate efforts to resolve the crisis via early elections, and Hayduk appeared much more engaged and in command in his May 8 meeting with Ambassador than in past sessions. Hayduk associate Chaliy told Ambassador May 12 that Hayduk, opposed to any discussion of a state of emergency, had been a man of his word and resigned when the President's team directed Hayduk to convene an NSDC meeting to consider dismissing the government. Plyushch is a two-time former Rada Speaker (1991-93, 2000-2002) who comes from the nationalist side of the political spectrum (in 2006 he ran with Yuri Kostenko's Ukrainian People's Party). He was recently named the MCC political point of contact; the Ukrainian MCC operation is just setting up shop.

17. (SBU) Hayduk's resignation came in the wake of a flurry of strange statements and rumors late May 11 about supposed assassination plots. Valeriy Heletei, head of the Presidential Secretariat service for law enforcement agencies, alleged at a press conference that the Presidential Secretariat had documents containing plans to murder

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Secretariat head Baloha and opposition leaders Tymoshenko and

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Lutsenko, as well as detailed information on the movements of Yushchenko and his family members. Claiming that "today, we face a real threat" of violence, Heletei stated that criminal leaders were working on the plans with radical political forces and those connected with the special services of other states - the standard way Ukrainian officials refer to Russia without naming it outright. Adding that there were compromising documents on several top Interior Ministry officials, Heletei alleged the schemes aimed at causing political confrontation and split up Ukraine.

¶18. (C) Comment: we currently cannot assess the validity of Heletei's claims. Opposition leader Lutsenko, speaking to Ambassador March 31 prior to a massive opposition rally on the Maidan intended to convince Yushchenko to issue a decree to dismiss the Rada and call elections, shared his concerns about potential provocations. He focused in particular on a group of ex-security officers from the SBU and the police special forces he said were being trained to cause problems; he fingered recently named deputy Interior Minister Zemlyansky as the organizer of dirty tricks. As deputy head of the SBU in 2004, Zemlyansky had masterminded the planting of weapons and explosives on the civic activists of PORA, similar to the mid-March actions against his network of civil society activists, Lutsenko alleged.

¶19. (U) Visit Embassy Kyiv's classified website:
www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/kiev.
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